

The financial practices of the United States Virgin Islands have taken a primary position in the minds of its citizens and thus remain of great importance to my colleague, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN). Without this legislation, one must worry that the Federal Government may have to take even more direct action if this debt continues to increase.

Finally, I would like to also point out that identical legislation, H.R. 3589, was passed by the Committee on Resources in the 108th Congress and by the whole House on September 22, 2004. We are hopeful that early action on this legislation during the Congressional session will translate into more momentum for the enactment of H.R. 62.

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I hope bipartisan support of this legislation will continue, and I urge adoption of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today we are poised to pass this bill for the second time. I thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for his kind and supportive remarks. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. POMBO) and the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL), particularly, but all of the members of the House Committee on Resources and the staff on both sides for their unwavering support in getting this bill to the floor again today.

Mr. Speaker, most people in my district agree that with the passage of this bill, H.R. 62, which would create a Chief Financial Officer for the U.S. Virgin Islands, we will make an important step forward and lay a stronger foundation for our children's future. We also would restore the confidence of the public in our government.

While it has not been an easy journey, it has become very clear that the people of the Virgin Islands recognize the need for more accountability, transparency, and efficiency in the management of Federal and local funding. The implementation of an independent CFO is clearly not the only way to achieve this, but it is the only viable proposal that has come forward over the last 8 years or more of increasing deficits and narrowly averted fiscal crises, crises which have only been delayed through repeated borrowing.

Included in H.R. 62 is also funding for the planning and implementation of a financial management system. This is a critical part of the bill and the responsibility of the Chief Financial Officer this bill would create. While the

groundwork has already begun under the current administration, it is my belief, given the millions of dollars that have been spent in the past on financial systems, that the only way to ensure that it is fully transparent, networked, and integrated is if it is overseen by someone who is independent and has no official territory to protect.

This is not to cast any aspersions on the hardworking public servants who currently head or work at any of our departments, including our Office of Management and Budget. Protecting one's turf is simply human nature. On the other hand, the system under which they labor is outdated, cumbersome, ineffective and cannot support the missions of their offices or the optimal functioning of our government.

I would be remiss, however, if I did not commend the Governor and his staff for the recent steps they have taken to restore our government to fiscal health. Yet our public services, our salaries, our contracting process with compliance with contracts, our infrastructure, and our accounting is not where it needs to be. And the fiscal information needed for effective planning is simply unavailable in a reliable form.

While the support for my bill is not unanimous, especially in the higher echelons of local leadership at home, it is broad. It exists at all levels of our society, and it spans all three islands.

I do not want to belabor the reasons which made it necessary for this bill to be here before this body today, except to say that major hurricanes, changes in Federal tax policy, as well as a systemic dysfunction in central government operations, have played a role.

There is no need or reason to point blame, but shame on us if we do not provide the leadership for which we were elected, and fix the problem. Pushing for passage of this bill has neither been easy nor have I taken it lightly. I understand the consequences of stepping beyond the political status quo, as I have done with this legislation; but I have also seen in other jurisdictions the consequences of acting as though everything was fine and doing nothing. And I have pursued it on behalf of and because of the strong and unwaiving support of the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

I want to thank my colleagues again for their support and ask for a "yea" vote.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as the ranking Democratic member of the Resources Committee, I would like to register my strong support of H.R. 62, to create the office of chief financial officer for the territory of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

This Chamber passed similar legislation in the 108th Congress because of the tireless and tenacious efforts of Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Today, we are bringing up this legislation early

in the Congress hoping the Senate will act on it expeditiously.

The financial condition of the Virgin Islands remains in trouble. Skyrocketing deficits coupled with inadequate fiscal controls have left the local government struggling to provide basic services to the people of the Virgin Islands.

Just last week, the U.S. Department of Education issued an order to the Virgin Islands Government to hire an independent contractor to manage approximately \$35 million in annual grants because the local government did not have a financial system in place to adequately account for the grants. Regrettably, this recent order was not the first of its kind by one of our Federal agencies levied against the local Virgin Islands Government.

Clearly, the lack of financial accountability and the potential for financial insolvency of the territory did not occur overnight. Nevertheless the introduction of this measure, by the distinguished representative of the Virgin Islands, DONNA CHRISTENSEN, continues to be met with controversy and opposition from many local political leaders.

DONNA CHRISTENSEN has made it clear that this legislation is something that she would rather not have to do, but the circumstances of her territory have made the choices for her. She is a brave woman for fighting for what she believes is in the best interest of her constituents and for her island and she should be commended.

Virgin Islands history will tout this legislation as a turning point in the fundamental approach that the territory handles its financial affairs.

I have said it before, and I will say it again today: When the next chapter in Profiles in Courage is written, it will be about the gentle lady from the Virgin Islands, DONNA CHRISTENSEN.

I urge my colleagues to support favorable passage by this body of H.R. 62.

Ms. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETRI). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 62.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

WESTERN RESERVE HERITAGE AREAS STUDY ACT

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 412) to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to determine the suitability and feasibility of establishing the Western Reserve Heritage Area.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 412

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Western Reserve Heritage Areas Study Act".

SEC. 2. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE STUDY REGARDING THE WESTERN RESERVE, OHIO.

(a) **FINDINGS.**—The Congress finds the following:

(1) The area that encompasses the modern-day counties of Trumbull, Mahoning, Ash-
tabula, Portage, Geauga, Lake, Cuyahoga, Summit, Medina, Huron, Lorain, Erie, Ot-
tawa, and Ashland in Ohio with the rich history in what was once the Western Reserve, has made a unique contribution to the cultural, political and industrial development of the United States.

(2) The Western Reserve is distinctive as the land settled by the people of Connecticut after the Revolutionary War. The Western Reserve holds a unique mark as the original wilderness land of the West that many settlers migrated to in order to begin life outside of the original 13 colonies.

(3) The Western Reserve played a significant role in providing land to the people of Connecticut whose property and land was destroyed during the Revolution. These settlers were descendants of the brave immigrants who came to the Americas in the 17th century.

(4) The Western Reserve offered a new destination for those who moved west in search of land and prosperity. The agricultural and industrial base that began in the Western Reserve still lives strong in these prosperous and historical counties.

(5) The heritage of the Western Reserve remains transfixed in the counties of Trumbull, Mahoning, Ashtabula, Portage, Geauga, Lake, Cuyahoga, Summit, Medina, Huron, Lorain, Erie, Ottawa, and Ashland in Ohio. The people of these counties are proud of their heritage as shown through the unwavering attempts to preserve agricultural land and the industrial foundation that has been embedded in this region since the establishment of the Western Reserve. Throughout these counties, historical sites, and markers preserve the unique traditions and customs of its original heritage.

(6) The counties that encompass the Western Reserve continue to maintain a strong connection to its historic past as seen through its preservation of its local heritage, including historic homes, buildings, and centers of public gatherings.

(7) There is a need for assistance for the preservation and promotion of the significance of the Western Reserve as the natural, historic and cultural heritage of the counties of Trumbull, Mahoning, Ashtabula, Portage, Geauga, Lake, Cuyahoga, Summit, Medina, Huron, Lorain, Erie, Ottawa and Ashland in Ohio.

(8) The Department of the Interior is responsible for protecting the Nation's cultural and historical resources. There are significant examples of such resources within these counties and what was once the Western Reserve to merit the involvement of the Federal Government in the development of programs and projects, in cooperation with the State of Ohio and other local governmental entities, to adequately conserve, protect, and interpret this heritage for future generations, while providing opportunities for education and revitalization.

(b) **STUDY.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary, acting through the National Park Service Rivers,

Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, Midwest Region, and in consultation with the State of Ohio, the counties of Trumbull, Mahoning, Ashtabula, Portage, Geauga, Lake, Cuyahoga, Summit, Medina, Huron, Lorain, Erie, Ottawa, and Ashland, and other appropriate organizations, shall carry out a study regarding the suitability and feasibility of establishing the Western Reserve Heritage Area in these counties in Ohio.

(2) **CONTENTS.**—The study shall include analysis and documentation regarding whether the Study Area—

(A) has an assemblage of natural, historic, and cultural resources that together represent distinctive aspects of American heritage worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use, and are best managed through partnerships among public and private entities and by combining diverse and sometimes noncontiguous resources and active communities;

(B) reflects traditions, customs, beliefs, and folklife that are a valuable part of the national story;

(C) provides outstanding opportunities to conserve natural, historic, cultural, or scenic features;

(D) provides outstanding recreational and educational opportunities;

(E) contains resources important to the identified theme or themes of the Study Area that retain a degree of integrity capable of supporting interpretation;

(F) includes residents, business interests, nonprofit organizations, and local and State governments that are involved in the planning, have developed a conceptual financial plan that outlines the roles for all participants, including the Federal Government, and have demonstrated support for the concept of a national heritage area;

(G) has a potential management entity to work in partnership with residents, business interests, nonprofit organizations, and local and State governments to develop a national heritage area consistent with continued local and State economic activity;

(H) has a conceptual boundary map that is supported by the public; and

(I) has potential or actual impact on private property located within or abutting the Study Area.

(c) **BOUNDARIES OF THE STUDY AREA.**—The Study Area shall be comprised of the counties of Trumbull, Mahoning, Ashtabula, Portage, Geauga, Lake, Cuyahoga, Summit, Medina, Huron, Lorain, Erie, Ottawa, and Ashland in Ohio.

The **SPEAKER pro tempore**. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 412.

The **SPEAKER pro tempore**. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 412 introduced by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to determine the suitability and feasibility of establishing the Western Reserve Heritage Area. The proposed study area under this bill would encompass 14 modern-day counties in Ohio which throughout history have made a unique contribution to the cultural, political, and industrial development of the United States.

The Western Reserve is every bit as distinctive as the land settled by the people of Connecticut after the Revolutionary War and holds a unique mark as the original wilderness in the West that many settlers migrated to in order to begin life outside the original 13 colonies.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 412 mirrors legislation that was supported by the majority and minority of the committee and the administration and passed the House during the 108th Congress. I urge adoption of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, National Heritage areas are grassroots projects where business and community leaders, local residents and State and local governments come together as neighbors to conserve and interpret the valuable historic and scenic resources in their communities.

Through the National Heritage Area Program, the National Park Service provides seed money and technical expertise to get these local projects off the ground and to leverage private, long-term funding for these areas.

H.R. 412, sponsored by our colleague, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), will authorize a study to determine whether or not an area in Ohio once known as the Western Reserve would qualify as a National Heritage Area.

The House approved this legislation during the 108th Congress, but the measure was never taken up in the other body.

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is to be commended for his efforts on behalf of the communities that would be included in this new area.

Despite being a relatively new Member of Congress, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is already demonstrating a willingness to work tirelessly on behalf of communities in need of the kind of Federal support the Heritage Area Program can provide.

We look forward to working with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) to create the Western Reserve Heritage Area should the study we are authorizing today support such a move. The gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL) and I congratulate the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) on this important legislation and urge our colleagues to support H.R. 412.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN).

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, in 1792 citizens came to northern Ohio to find a place to call their own after the American Revolution forced many out of house and home. They called this place the Western Reserve. It was a place of new beginnings, and these fervent and industrious people made Ohio strong and prosperous. These settlers, mostly from Connecticut, were descendants of the brave immigrants who came to the Americas in the 17th century.

It is with great honor that by passing this legislation we will preserve the integrity of the cultural landscape for future generations to call home.

The Western Reserve is significant to our Nation's history, and it will be through education and public investment that we will help redefine our communities with the designation they so deserve.

The Western Reserve holds the distinction of being home to three U.S. Presidents and three U.S. Supreme Court Justices. This was home to the foundation of the steel industry and the world's rubber capital. The Western Reserve had the first U.S. newspaper for African Americans and the oldest labor newspaper. We are an inventive people, with many firsts in the automotive and electrical worlds. This is the birthplace of Thomas Edison and John Brown, the famous abolitionist.

We have regional strengths that set us apart from other areas, from our respected universities to our diverse business community to a wide range of natural and recreational resources. The agricultural and industrial base that began in the Western Reserve still lives strong in these prosperous and historical counties. These counties include Trumbull, Mahoning, Summit, Portage, Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Medina, Ottawa, Ashland, Lake, Geauga, Lorain, Huron, and Erie.

The Western Reserve Heritage Area will unite northern Ohio and will help develop a plan focused on conserving the special qualities of the local culture and landscape that will once again define these communities as a good place to settle and make new beginnings.

We are already starting to see some of the benefits. The original Packard car was developed in this Western Reserve and the annual event that we have brings \$5 million to Trumbull County in travel tourism money.

I would just like to share a quote because now, not only with the Western Reserve Heritage Area coming together, the counties in the old Western Reserve are coming together economically as well. The foundations are coming together to focus their efforts and their money and certain aspects that will help transform our economy. I

would just like to share a quote from the fund of all of these, the Fund For Our Economic Future and the fund chairman, Robert Briggs, says that "most of the pieces needed to make northeast Ohio a global economic powerhouse are in place. One of the missing pieces, however, is a shared vision and understanding that the residents in these counties in northeast Ohio are interconnected in a regional economy. By breaking down jurisdictional boundaries created by cities and counties and thinking regionally, we will think economic transformation to stimulate exponential growth."

The Western Reserve Heritage Area can be the organizing principle of this area and lead to the transformation of our economy.

I thank my colleagues for the opportunity to share these views today.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 412.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GULLAH/GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE ACT

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 694) to enhance the preservation and interpretation of the Gullah/Geechee cultural heritage, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 694

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Act".

SEC. 2. PURPOSES.

The purposes of this Act are to—

(1) recognize the important contributions made to American culture and history by African Americans known as the Gullah/Geechee who settled in the coastal counties of South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida;

(2) assist State and local governments and public and private entities in South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida in interpreting the story of the Gullah/Geechee and preserving Gullah/Geechee folklore, arts, crafts, and music; and

(3) assist in identifying and preserving sites, historical data, artifacts, and objects associated with the Gullah/Geechee for the benefit and education of the public.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

For the purposes of this Act, the following definitions apply:

(1) COMMISSION.—The term "Commission" means the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission established under this Act.

(2) HERITAGE CORRIDOR.—The term "Heritage Corridor" means the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor established by this Act.

(3) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 4. GULLAH/GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor.

(b) BOUNDARIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Heritage Corridor shall be comprised of those lands and waters generally depicted on a map entitled "Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor" numbered GGCHC 80,000 and dated September 2004. The map shall be on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the National Park Service and in an appropriate State office in each of the States included in the Heritage Corridor. The Secretary shall publish in the Federal Register, as soon as practicable after the date of enactment of this Act, a detailed description and map of the boundaries established under this subsection.

(2) REVISIONS.—The boundaries of the heritage corridor may be revised if the revision is—

(A) proposed in the management plan developed for the Heritage Corridor;

(B) approved by the Secretary in accordance with this Act; and

(C) placed on file in accordance with paragraph (1).

(c) ADMINISTRATION.—The Heritage Corridor shall be administered in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 5. GULLAH/GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR COMMISSION.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is hereby established a commission to be known as the "Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission" whose purpose shall be to assist Federal, State, and local authorities in the development and implementation of a management plan for those land and waters specified in section 4.

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—The Commission shall be composed of 15 members appointed by the Secretary as follows:

(1) Four individuals nominated by the State Historic Preservation Officer of South Carolina and two individuals each nominated by the State Historic Preservation Officer of each of Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida and appointed by the Secretary.

(2) Two individuals from South Carolina and one individual from each of Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida who are recognized experts in historic preservation, anthropology, and folklore, appointed by the Secretary.

(c) TERMS.—Members of the Commission shall be appointed to terms not to exceed 3 years. The Secretary may stagger the terms of the initial appointments to the Commission in order to assure continuity of operation. Any member of the Commission may serve after the expiration of their term until a successor is appointed. A vacancy shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made.

(d) TERMINATION.—The Commission shall terminate 10 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 6. OPERATION OF THE COMMISSION.

(a) DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION.—To further the purposes of the Heritage Corridor, the Commission shall—